**Entrance**

**Dana Gioia**

Whoever you are: step out of doors tonight,  
Out of the room that lets you feel secure.  
Infinity is open to your sight.  
Whoever you are.  
With eyes that have forgotten how to see  
From viewing things already too well-known,  
Lift up into the dark a huge, black tree  
And put it in the heavens: tall, alone.  
And you have made the world and all you see.  
It ripens like the words still in your mouth.  
And when at last you comprehend its truth,  
Then close your eyes and gently set it free.

*(After Rilke)*

from *Interrogations at Noon*, 2001  
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Poetry Explication

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**"Entrance" by Dana Gioia**

    In today’s rushed and hectic society, it is not easy to ignore the beauty of life. Crazed schedules cause people to have little time to stop, rest, and reflect on life's and nature's marvelous qualities. People are immersed in a culture that takes everything for face value instead of looking beyond the surface for a deeper meaning. Dana Gioia's "Entrance" employs symbolism, exact rhyme, and imagery to demonstrate how it is sometimes necessary to take a risky step back and marvel at the wonders of life.

    The symbolism in "Entrance" creates appropriate images of particular objects that have a higher meaning. In the opening lines of the poem, the narrator demands that the reader "step out of doors tonight, / Out of the room that lets you feel secure" (2-3). At face value, this phrase can simply mean that the narrator wants the reader to go outside into the darkness of the night. However, taking into consideration the poem's theme of stopping and examining the beauty of life in the moment, the "room" from which the narrator wishes the reader to leave is not an actual room; but instead, the room is a symbol for a state of mind in which nothing is taken for any deeper meaning (3). This "room" symbolizes a comfort zone or a sense of security. Stepping outside of this room involves taking a risk and going outside of society’s expectations. Later in the poem, the narrator says  "[lifting] up into the dark a huge, black tree" when describing how people view things (7). In context of the poem, this tree could simply be a large tree in a backyard darkened by nighttime. However, being foreboding and black, this tree symbolizes the darkness that has been blinding the intended audience from seeing more depth beyond the surface. Trees, being plants, are constantly growing and changing. The tree in "Entrance" symbolizes the growth of the reader should he or she follow the narrator's command to step outside of a comfort zone. This growth is not physical but rather growth of the mind to expand knowledge and understanding of the world. The symbolism of the “room” and “tree” in "Entrance" enhances the image of the poem’s setting while also fitting with the general theme of branching out and growing in understanding deeper meanings(3, 7).

    Rhyme is present in "Entrance" at the end of almost every line. The first instance of exact rhyme is "tonight" rhyming with "sight" (1, 3). The rhyme is between the -ight sounds at the ends of the two words. The importance of this rhyme is to emphasize the relationship of the lack of ability to see at nighttime due to darkness. However, the text implies that in going out into the night, the reader's sights and horizons will be expanded to see the deeper meanings of objects around him or her. Once a reader follows the narrator's instruction to leave the "room," or the comfort zone, "infinity is open to your sight" despite the nighttime (3). In rhyming "see" and "tree" (5, 7), the narrator is making a connection between gaining sight and the obstruction of the tree being removed. This is another example of an exact masculine rhyme of the -ee sound. Once the "tree" or darkness is removed, the intended reader is at last able to "see" what was not previously visible. Rhyming of "see" is used once again with "free" (9, 12). Once gaining sight, the narrator believes that the reader will be able to see all and is therefore set "free" from the restrictions of seeing merely what's on the surface (12). By rhyming "known" with "alone", the difference between these two words is emphasized (6, 8). In context, the narrator claims that once the reader can stand alone, he or she is able to see past what is already known about what is in front of them and delve into a more thorough interpretation of things aside from outside, initial appearances. In doing so, the reader will be following the narrator's instructions to break out of any comfort zone and wonder at what has not yet been seen or understood. Rhyme provides further emphasis on contrasting words that relate to how society views things on the surface instead of how the narrator believes society is losing the ability to find greater meaning.

The text utilizes imagery to create a vivid picture for the setting of the poem. The words “tonight” and “secure” provide an image of darkness and the unknown (1, 2). With these words, the text implies that in entering the darkness that accompanies the night, security and a sense of safety are lost. This imagery relates to the setting of the poem, which corresponds to the theme of taking risks and venturing into new ideas and actions. Along with the imagery of a shadowy night, the text describes in “the dark a huge, black tree” (7). In the context of this poem, the tree is being lifted up into the heavens just as a covering would be lifted from an eye to gain sight. The blackness and darkness of the tree create a mysteriousness and a foreboding beauty and curiosity of the unknown that is about to be uncovered. The imagery of this tree fits in with the imagery of nighttime while also correlating to trees symbolizing growth. Imagery is useful in strengthening the idea that stepping outside a comfort zone will open up new worlds of thought and knowledge.

In order to get the idea across for readers to branch out and examine the world more closely, “Entrance” makes great use of imagery, symbolism, and rhyme. Rhyming draws attention to the key words that are essential to understanding the theme. Imagery and symbolism are present in order to create not only an image of a realistic setting for the poem, but also to provide artistic and creative thought. In providing deeper meaning, the text is presenting an opportunity to its audience to practice finding a deeper meaning of what is being presented. In order to understand the deeper meaning of “Entrance,” it is essential to utilize the mind’s ability to look beyond the surface.

Works Cited

Gioia, Dana. "Poetry 180 - Entrance." *Library of Congress Home*. N.p., n.d. Web. 8 Dec.

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